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Global Warming, Status of Urban Wetlands in New York Metro Area Debated

Science Conference in New Jersey Meadowlands Produces Findings on Global Warming, Renewable Energy, Urban Wetlands Monitoring

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission's Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute and Rutgers University Newark today commenced the three-day Meadowlands Symposium to discuss pertinent scientific research findings in the New Jersey Meadowlands and greater New York City Metropolitan Area.

Susan Bass Levin, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and Chairwoman of the NJMC, addressed the importance of science-supported policymaking in the 30.4-square mile Meadowlands District of Bergen and Hudson counties.

"It is imperative that the actions of government reflect the research of the scientific community when advancing environmental policy," said Levin. "That is why the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission has continued to guide its environmental policies, including the preservation of 8,400 acres of wetlands and open space, commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, and establishment of a Regional Renewable Energy District, with the use of ongoing research and objective benchmarks. Armed with this crucial data, we know that we must continue to defend urban natural areas and confront global climate change in new and innovative ways such as those we pursue today in New Jersey's Meadowlands."

Day 1 of the Symposium focused on the regional effects of climate change, sea level rise, and the potential of renewable energy technologies to reduce the adverse environmental impacts of fossil fuels. Highlights included a presentation by Dr. Robert Socolow of Princeton University on a system of "wedges," or counter-measures, that can be taken to slow the steady trend of global warming. Venkatachalam Ramaswamy released an updated report from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The Office of the NJ State Climatologist discussed the local effects of climate change and revealed the findings of meteorological and thermal monitoring.

Day 2 will explore studies on biodiversity, organisms, health and ecosystem sustainability. Several of the studies were commissioned by the NJMC, including studies of the Meadowlands bird population, biodiversity in the region, and testing of Aquabok, a material being used to separate contaminated sediments from the Kearny Marsh food web.

Day 3 will focus on the monitoring methodologies for urban wetlands, including air, water, and sediment sampling. Topics throughout Days 2 and 3 will encompass research beyond the Meadowlands District, at sites including the neighboring Passaic River, Hudson River, Gowanus Canal, Staten Island, Bronx River and New York Harbor.

“By encouraging dialog among scientists and offering a venue to share findings, we are hoping to build an engine for greater environmental knowledge and intelligent interaction with our world’s life support system,” said NJMC Executive Director Robert Ceberio. “Further, we recognize that solutions to large scale challenges such as global climate change and resolving the legacies of our industrial past must be comprehensive but also must start with us as individuals and all of us as a region.”

The Symposium will conclude with field trips into the Meadowlands and its tributaries aboard NJMC pontoon boats, offering attendees an up-close look at a recovering ecosystem home to 260 species of birds, a diverse population of fish, mammals and other wildlife.

For copies of research abstracts, researcher biographies or contact information, e-mail Jeff Fucci at jeff.fucci@njmeadowlands.gov

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